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If 8 seconds are stored at a 2 frames per second rate, the sequence preferably comprises 4

seconds before and 4 seconds after the event.

Advantageously, the sequence is displayed in PIP form, which is a more attention-drawing format and which needs less storage memory.

Preferably, in the case of multiple events, a sequence including a latest of the
5 multiple events is repeatedly displayed.

These and other aspects of the invention will be apparent from and elucidated with reference to the embodiments described hereinafter.

10 The drawing shows an embodiment of an observation system in accordance with
the present invention

15 In the drawing, four cameras A, B, C, D are coupled to a control unit CU. The control unit CU may further receive an antenna signal from an antenna AN thru a tuner (not shown) to allow the guards to watch a football game or something like that. In accordance with the present invention, the control unit CU also receives a doorbell signal from a doorbell DB, an alarm signal from a wire cut detector WCD detecting whether a wire W is cut, and/or a movement detection signal from a movement detector (not shown). In this embodiment, it is supposed that camera A watches the doorbell DB, while camera B watches the wire W. An output of the control unit CU is coupled to a monitor M for displaying the camera signals A, B, C, D (all four together or a selected one of them), or the football match from the antenna AN.

If the doorbell DB is pressed (or some other for observation purposes relevant event occurs), the control unit CU stores a small sequence of images (e.g. 16 images at a rate of 2 images per second), preferably half of which precedes the doorbell-pressing action and half of which follows the doorbell-pressing action. This is possible if the images from the cameras are continuously applied to a storage unit (not shown) and stored upon activation of the doorbell DB or upon some other activity, or if the images of the cameras are continuously spatially and temporally subsampled and delayed, and stored immediately upon receipt of an alarm. The delayed signal is then stored and will show some seconds preceding the alarm as well as some seconds following the alarm. The subsampled images are shown in a picture-in-picture (PIP) window E on the display screen of the monitor M. Preferably, a known photo-finish PIP IC or IC set is used for this purpose. While in the drawing, the PIP

image E is shown inserted into image B from camera B among images A, C, D from cameras A, C, D, it is also possible that image E pops up while a football match is shown on the monitor M, or that the monitor M automatically switches over from displaying images received by the antenna AN to (one of) the camera images A, B, C, D with PIP image E repeatedly showing the relevant event.

A practical embodiment is briefly summarized as follows. The invention can be applied in a low-cost black and white observation system. In this observation system there will be an event replay (store and replay) function. If there is an event (doorbell or alarm) then the observation system stores 4 seconds before the event and 4 seconds after the event in a PIP memory. In case of a cable cut disconnecting a camera from the control unit, the last 8 eight seconds before the event occurs, will be stored. During storage of the frames it will display at the same time the frames, in a small (1/8 size) PIP in the right top corner of the screen, in a sequential loop, the stored frames. The displaying speed is at the store sample rate. If there is an event, this replay function will be started automatically after detecting such an event. In case of multiple events on multiple cameras, the system will always switch to the camera corresponding to the latest event, and this latest event will be stored and replayed. The replay function starts with the oldest stored frame. In 50 and 60 Hz systems the number of stored frames is 16.

It should be noted that the above-mentioned embodiments illustrate rather than limit the invention, and that those skilled in the art will be able to design many alternative embodiments without departing from the scope of the appended claims. In the claims, any reference signs placed between parentheses shall not be construed as limiting the claim. The word "comprising" does not exclude the presence of other elements than those listed in a claim. The invention can be implemented by means of hardware comprising several distinct elements, and by means of a suitably programmed computer. In the device claim enumerating several means, several of these means can be embodied by one and the same item of hardware. Where the claim mentions an observation camera and an observation monitor, several of these cameras and/or monitors may be present in the observation system. The sequence can be displayed temporally subsequently in one PIP section E on the display, or as e.g. 16 small pictures spatially adjacent to each other. The control unit CU and the monitor M may be included in one apparatus, or may be sold as separate units as shown in the drawing.